DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 344 575 IR 015 523

AUTHOR Descy, Don E.
TITLE Instructional Media Utilization, Classroom Learning, and Teacher Burnout.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Mankato Statement: The Journal of the College of Education; p11-14 Spr 1991

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Environment; Communications; *Educational Media; Elementary Secondary Education; Mass Media Use; Student Motivation; *Teacher Burnout; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The importance of educational media in the education of students cannot be overemphasized. Yet, many teachers are reluctant to incorporate mass media into their teaching methods. Some teachers are apprehensive of new ideas, methods, and materials. Others prefer their traditional teaching methods. A third group would like to incorporate new ideas and technologies but lack the necessary training and/or administrative support. Teachers may also experience burnout, a condition defined as a negative pattern of responding to stressful teaching events, to students, and to teaching as a career. Research indicates that the use of educational media has a positive effect on teachers and students alike. Educational media may stimulate teachers' creativity and inspire continued growth in the effectiveness of teachers as professional educators. Educational media also affect student learning, both facilitating learning performance and increasing student motivation to learn. (39 references) (DB)

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Don E. Descy

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Over the years a substantial group of educators has been slow to incorporate new ideas and technologies into their classroom routine. There are many reasons for this. Some teachers are apprehensive of new ideas, methods, and materials because of the fresh memory of such revolutionary saviors as programmed instruction and modern math. Others prefer the "business as usual" approach using lessons perfected through years of use. A third group lacks the ability and/or dedication needed to withstand the discomfort associated with change. And another group contains teachers who would like to incorporate new ideas and technologies into their class but have no one there to show them how to do it. No matter what the reasons, two groups are being negatively affected: students and teachers.

A significant body of empirically based research points to the fact that the sound incorporation of instructional media into the classroom creates a win-win situation. It is a win-win situation because:

1. Students win: classroom instructional media utilization improves the learning environment for students; and
2. Educators win: classroom instructional media utilization improves the teaching environment for educators.

Throughout the last decade, the introduction of totally new types of educational media hardware and software for use by classroom teachers has increased dramatically. Video cassette recorders (VCRs), camcorders, computers, videodiscs, and CD-ROM are now commonplace in many schools throughout the country. By late 1988, ninety percent of all schools had VCRs, and over 1.7 million computers were in use in public schools across the nation (Glenn and Carrier, 1989).

The importance of insructional media utilization in the education of students cannot be overemphasized (Abu-Jaber, 1987). Research substantiates significant educational gains associated with its use. For example, Molstad (1974) found that properly produced and/or selected media, when systematically integrated into an instructional program, can play a significant positive role in the overall achievement of the learner. This finding is also supported by work done by Wilkinson (1980). Molstad (1974) found that equal amounts of learning can often be accomplished in a shorter period of time if instructional media is used. He also found that the application of the systems approach to instructional development also facilitates learning. Two other important side benefits have also been discovered. One is that learners prefer instructional programs in which a variety of media is used (Molstad, 1974; Sibalwa, 1983). The second is that the use of instructional media can have a significant positive impact on the self-image of the learner (Wilkinson, 1980). Research has also shown that it is not the type of medium that is used but how the medium is used that affects student learning (Schramm, 1973).

Instructional media utilization should have an important role to play in educational restructuring. Added emphasis is now being placed on the individualization of instruction and outcome based learning. This emphasis takes into account not only what is learned but also the learner him/herself. Some of this individualization of instruction is based on learning theories developed by several theorists including psychologist Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner hypothesizes that there are seven different intelligences valued by our society (bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, and spatial). According to Gardner each individual is capable of up to seven different methods of processing information. Each individual exhibits a different profile of these intelligences. "We are failing so many students simply because we are not able to tap into the way they process learning," stated Sue Teele (1990), Director of Education Extension at the University of California, Riverside.

Albert Shanker (1990) offered instructional media as a key when he said:

> Technology can translate age-old rhetoric about individualizing instruction into reality...Today, all kinds of technology exist that can make individualized learning possible; what's more, it is commercially available and relatively inexpensive (p. A4).

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Research seems to indicate that a second group benefits from the use of instructional media in the classroom: the teachers. It is not easy to train and retain good teachers. Surveys have found that twenty-six percent of all new teachers leave after just two years. Sixty percent leave by the end of their fifth year (Henry, 1986). A more disturbing finding is that the most academically talented teachers are the ones most likely to leave the profession first (Henry, 1986; Lyson,and Falk, 1984; Mark and Anderson, 1984; Schlecty and Vance, 1983). Kremer and Hofman (1981) stated that a great deal of pre-service planning, resources, and personpower is wasted due to this high rate of attrition.

There are many reasons, both personal and professional, for both new and seasoned teachers to leave the profession. Research has pointed to "burnout" as one reason. Seidman (1985) defined burnout as "a negative pattern of responding to stressful teaching events, to students, and to teaching as a career, as well as a perception that there is a lack of administrative support" (p. 2). Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) defined it as a successive loss of concern, purpose, energy, and idealism brought on by conditions of work.

Seidman (1985) hypothesized that this research links teacher burnout negatively to media utilization. He surveyed 545 elementary and secondary school teachers in Fort Worth, Texas. He employed a media utilization inventory, the Teacher Burnout Scale (Seidman and Zager, 1987; Zager and Seidman, 1983), and a demographic questionnaire. His research question was: "Do teachers who are low in burnout use certain media materials more frequently than do teachers who are on the other end of the burnout spectrum?" (p. 2)

Seidman found that teachers at the high end of the burnout scale used pictures, models, games, simulations, filmstrips, and videotapes less frequently then did teachers at the low end of the scale. Interestingly, he found no difference in the two groups' usage of computers and motion pictures. In conclusion Seidman stated that "...it seems safe to at least conjecture that the unwillingness to use media is both a symptom and a cause of burnout" (p. 13).

We do realize that teacher burnout is only one of several reasons that explain why teachers do not utilize instructional media in their classrooms. Personal bias, fear of technology, teaching style, lack of administrative support, and accessibility of software and hardware are some other reasons (Bellamy, Whitaker, and White, 1978: Dobbert, 1976; Gillet, 1973; Ingersoll and Smith, 1985; Smeltzer, 1988). Gray (1982) concluded that teachers could "...overcome burnout and face old jobs with renewed interest" (p. 22) if they use a variety of instructional strategies and stimulating media in their classrooms.

Despite the positive effects that media utilization has on both the learner and the teacher, the simple fact remains that educators at all levels do not incorporate a great deal of instructional media into their instruction (Carter and Wedman, 1984; Leisner, 1978; Seidman, 1986; McCleese, 1983). As Smeltzer (1988) succinctly put it: "...teachers have preferred to rely on the traditional classroom pedagogy than to incorporate mediated instruction in their lessons" (p. 222).

One reason that is often mentioned for lack of use is lack of instructional media hardware and software in the school. Though this may be the reason in some cases, Dobbert (1976) stated that instructional media is not often used in schools where it is available. Smith and Ingersoll (1984) found that 67 percent of American teachers working in schools containing computers used these computers less then once a month or not at all.

What then is the reason for this lack of use? Carter and Schmidt (1985) reviewed instructional media utilization by two groups of student teachers and concluded that the effectiveness of pre-service instructional media may be a major part of the problem. Bellamy, Whitaker, and White (1978) pointed to a combination of technophobia and just plain laziness. The attitude they found was that:

> ...the majority of teachers are afraid of media equipment, are unaware of resources available, and are unwilling to expend the extra effort required to locate media resources, plan for the use of such resources in a presentation, or make arrangements for set-up and operation of necessary equipment (p.7).

That was in 1978, well before the explosion of computers into the classroom or the introduction of camcorders, videodiscs, hypermedia, and CD-ROM. Several years earlier, Gillet (1973) also suggested that laziness and listlessness were reasons why teachers do not use instructional media in their classrooms.

There is a major problem in retaining high quality teachers. Many bright individuals become frustrated very early in their careers. McDonald and Eliam (1980) felt that the first years of teaching contain massive amounts of stress. They "...believe that the seeds of 'burnout' are planted during this period" (p. 14). Dillon-Peterson (1982) stated that the beginning teaching experience may be the most important part of a teacher's career in inspiring continued growth in the effectiveness of a person as a professional educator. Research also suggests that utilization of instructional media does tend to

decrease stress related burnout. It can also increase student achievement, self-image, and attitude toward instruction.

Albert Shanker (1990) emphasized the importance of instructional technology in the classroom when he concluded:

> ...most school districts in this country aren't turning to technology for help. In private business, it's exactly the opposite. The work today's school leaders are doing with technology should not be an add-on or peripheral. American public education will not survive without rethinking what teaching means and how kids learn. And there is no way of doing that without the appropriate use of technology (p. A4).

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